

# **CRANSTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE**

**WEDNESDAY, APRIL 9, 2008**

**WILLIAM A. BRIGGS BUILDING (REED CONFERENCE ROOM)**

**845 PARK AVENUE**

**EXECUTIVE SESSION: 5:30 P.M.**

**PUBLIC SESSION: IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING EXECUTIVE SESSION**

**PUBLIC WORK SESSION: IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING PUBLIC MEETING**

## **MINUTES**

**A special meeting of the Cranston School Committee was held on the evening of the above date at the William A. Briggs Building with the following members present: Mrs. Greifer, Ms. Iannazzi, Mr. Lombardi, Mr. Stycos, Mr. Traficante, and Mrs. Tocco-Greenaway. Mr. Archetto was absent. Also present were Mr. Scherza, Mr. Nero, Mr. Balducci, Mr. Votto, Mrs. Lundsten, and Mr. Laliberte.**

**The meeting was called to order at 5:35 p.m. It was moved by Mr. Lombardi, seconded by Mrs. Greifer and unanimously carried that the members adjourn to Executive Session pursuant to RI State Laws PL 42-46-5(a)(1) Personnel (Special Education Assistant Directors and Directors) and PL 42-46-5(a)(2) Collective Bargaining and Litigation (possible litigation – Caruolo Action.)**

**Chairman Traficante reconvened public session at 7:00 p.m.**

**The roll was called.**

## **I. Executive Session Minutes Sealed – April 9, 2008**

**Moved by Mr. Lombardi, seconded by Mrs. Greifer and unanimously carried that the April 9, 2008 Executive Session minutes remain confidential.**

**Chairman Traficante reported out that no vote was taken in Executive Session.**

**The meeting was adjourned to the public work session.**

**Chairman Traficante stated that the committee would discuss the Kindergarten curriculum issue first.**

**Moved by Ms. Iannazzi, seconded by Mrs. Greifer and unanimously carried to allow CTA members and Kindergarten parents to be able to speak on this matter.**

### **1. Kindergarten Curriculum Discussion**

Mr. Nero stated that approximately two months ago he met with the elementary principals, and at that time, there was a consensus by them for the administration to examine delivery of unified arts courses during Kindergarten. They asked him to look into it from a policy point of view as well as from a contractual point of view. At that time in February, they looked at all the policies and could find nothing with regard to this. They have since found one which has to do with physical education. Given the fact that their reasoning was at this early age they wanted to see them with more time on task in the academic subjects. The teachers were getting contractually what they had coming

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to them in terms of time off between AM and PM Kindergarten. They had a follow-up meeting approximately one month later where they re-examined the issue again. At that time, he felt there was overwhelming consensus on this, and since that time, there are a couple who feel they should rethink that. With regard to some of the Title 1 schools, there is one school where 10% of the Kindergarteners are going to repeat Kindergarten, and this is along with the fact that in addition they have extended day program. He apologized to the committee for not giving them a heads up in giving them the information, but he looked at this strictly from a policy standpoint. He had a meeting with the Alliance to give them a heads up. A member of the Alliance who is not present at this meeting, felt that

this was something the Kindergarten teachers would agree with. The issue is that the students are tested beginning in Grade 3 in the academic subjects, and with all the talk of going to all-day Kindergarten, it is not the administration's intention to retard the efforts of the unified arts but it was an overwhelming feeling going back to February and March by the principals that they would much prefer to have them on academics for the 2-1/2 hours that they have them in the morning and the 2-1/2 hours that they have them in the afternoon.

Ms. Iannazzi requested a presentation from Mr. Flynn as to what itinerant teachers are teaching Kindergarten students. She acknowledged Mrs. Jeschke who was present at this meeting. Ms. Iannazzi further commented that the committee did acknowledge Mrs. Jeschke at the April 7th School Committee meeting, but she wasn't present. She is retiring, unfortunately, this year; and she was her favorite teacher growing up.

Mr. Flynn stated that he wished to make a few remarks as to why he was opposed to this. With regard to Mr. Nero's comments, the solution is really all-day Kindergarten. Then, they wouldn't have to worry about how much time on task they have. He is hoping that Mrs. Jeschke wasn't forced to retire with the thought of losing her planning time. He indicated that he was going to ask some of the Kindergarten teachers to speak about their program. He remarked that administration shouldn't do this because of all the hard work

they do. That block of time in the middle of that schedule is clearly delineated for travel and lunch and for them to re-calibrate their rooms. They have a double group of students every day; they do twice as many parent teacher conferences as everyone else; they do twice as many grades at report time; and they do narratives for most of the students which is very labor intensive. They have to bring the students to the bus in between on a daily basis. The parents want to have conferences every day with them, and that is not planning time. They then have to go back to their rooms to maybe have a few minutes for lunch, set up their room again for the next group of students coming in which is an entirely different group from the morning group. If anyone in this room ever followed a Kindergarten teacher around for a day, they would be amazed at the energy that it takes to do that job. That is the real reason why the administration should not go forward with this. Contractually the language is clear, and it is unambiguous that they are allowed this fifty-five minute block. They use to have teachers who traveled from school to school, and now there is only one. They had to have lunch and time to set up their room for their new group of students. They are considered elementary classroom teachers as opposed to itinerant teachers. They were excluded from the first paragraph that talked about common planning about the 350 minutes because they had that block of time in the middle of the day. However, they weren't excluded later on in that contract when the union negotiated a block of planning time for every teacher on a daily basis which wasn't the case for many years in

elementary school. About fifteen years ago, that finally came to fruition where every teacher in this district got a block of planning time on a daily basis. Mr. Flynn read from the teachers' contract that portion that pertained to this planning time. It was intended that these people would not be penalized and that this would not be considered their planning time. It is a thirty-minute block of time. When one sees all the things they do on a daily basis, and the time before and after school they are doing all the other things that classroom teachers are doing. They are meeting the students on the bus; they are getting things ready for the day. It is not their planning time. In some schools, these things are factored into their duties. They are entitled to and deserve that thirty-minute block of planning time every day. If the School Committee moves to take these itinerants away, they will prohibit them from being allowed to do that. He advised the committee not to go down that road because it is a potential grievance, and he felt that it was sustainable. It is an insult to the hard work that these people do, and they would be sending the wrong message to the people in this district that the Kindergarten students really don't matter. That is where they get their foundation in the unified arts. There is also a misconception about the fact that every student in both sessions doesn't get a thirty minute block a day. It is one a day, and they alternate it so that they rotate it through the schedule.

**Carolyn Peck, Program Supervisor for Art – Mrs. Peck prepared a folder titled “A Case for the Arts”. She indicated that included in this information packet was an invitation to the upcoming Arts Fest that is coming up. At that time, they will be exhibiting art for grades Kindergarten through grades 12. She explained all of the information included in the folder such as excerpts from the BEP, Basic Education Plan. She noted that it states that the curriculum of the Kindergarten shall include the initial development of basic concepts in the following areas, and art is included in that along with music. She went on to explain the indicators noted for the art curriculum in the BEP. A copy of this information packet is available in the School Committee Office. Mrs. Peck also explained the Rhode Island K-12 Arts Framework which is also included in this packet. Mrs. Peck went on to explain the other information in the folder which included “The School Administrator”, an article titled “Creating a Brighter Workforce with the Arts”, “Bucking Trends: Expanding the Arts”, “Why the Arts Deserve Center Stage”, and “The Best Schools: How Human Development Research Should Inform Educational Practice.”**

**Mrs. Peck went on to say that art, music, and the performing arts are extremely important for all students especially Kindergarten. At this point in time, the district services pre-Kindergarten. She asked if they were now saying that the pre-Kindergarten students will receive art and music; then they will go to Kindergarten and not receive it; and then go to 1st grade and maybe they’ll receive it. It is not right. She**

**commented that she had two art teachers who wished to show the School Committee some of the work of their Kindergarten students.**

**Claudia Venditto who has been teaching elementary art for thirteen years showed the committee Kindergarten samples of work. She also showed them samples of work from the older grades in order to show them how their work builds up from Kindergarten. Ms. Venditto finished her presentation by commenting that it would be a sad message to Kindergarten students not to be given the opportunity to express themselves in relation to their classroom curriculum as well as the art curriculum. They**

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**will see the other students going to art, and this is a crucial time for them to be expressing themselves as well. She hoped that they would have the opportunity to express themselves.**

**Marisa Iacovone, Art Teacher at Orchard Farms School – Ms. Iacovone distributed to the committee a fact sheet on art. She highlighted for the committee the most important facts about art. She felt that there is art all around everyone, and she teaches the students how to see it. The students don't realize how much art is a part of their lives, and it is her job to point it out and show them to respect it.**

**She explained how she teaches art to her students. She also commented that she learns a lot about her students and what is going**



on in their lives through their drawings. To some of her students, it is art therapy; and they look forward to it. They go from creating shapes to creating a masterpiece, and they feel good about what they have accomplished. She tried to make them feel more confident and comfortable about their work. Many students aren't allowed to use materials at home and enjoy using them in school. Some stay in from recess in order to do art. She stated again that art is all around them, and she teaches them how to see it.

**Bethany Bobola** – She is a parent and a music educator. She has three children in this district. She has one in Kindergarten at Eden Park School. She told stories about how much her child loves gym class and going to school. She further commented that next year she will have another child in Kindergarten, and the thought of him not having the whole educational experience as his siblings is wrong. As a music educator, she understands the importance of early childhood education. Every child is born with music aptitude to achieve their potential in music. Once they are born, that level goes down. They need to be in an environment where they are nourished in a good musical environment. She was not talking about listening to Barney or listening to various CD's. They need to be listening and singing songs that are in different tonalities and different meters, to be chanting and moving and to be familiar with tonal patterns and rhythm patterns. This needs to be done before they come to Kindergarten. When they come to Kindergarten she begins to build that foundation. At approximately age 9, that aptitude stabilizes.

**They don't have that potential to achieve; they still accomplish, but the aptitude level stabilizes. She wishes she could have her students every day. She currently serves four schools, and she loves what she does. To delay music education would be like asking or telling the music teacher that they are going to put off learning the alphabet and learning to blend letters until first grade. She stated this should not be done. With regard to art, the students need organized sport and physical education classes and art.**

**Mark Colozzi, Program Supervisor for Music - He stated that after reviewing the curriculum regarding this topic, two words come to mind for him which are competence and cooperation. He had some of the best math teachers at Cranston West. They gave him help every day, and it did make him a better mathematician. He complemented the late Evelyn Montanaro who was his music teacher.**

**In his Kindergarten class, he had the confidence and cooperation that he had from his music classes which is what got him through what was a tough time as a Kindergartener. He was not a good math student, but he was a good music student and became a music educator. He asked as Mrs. Peck had asked if they would be teaching to pre- Kindergarten in special education and regular education, skipping a year, and then**

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**coming back to grade 1. This is another budgetary reason, and the**

district has to move beyond that and think of the cultural education of the students. The education to the innovation that these students can get could spur the next magical minds of engineering. He became a believer these past two weeks with the portfolio system. As he was sitting through the portfolio presentations at Cranston East and West he became a believer. He was amazed at the eloquence and the class of the students with their portfolio presentations. He went on to explain some of the student portfolio presentations made this past week. He also commented on the wonderful work done by the art teachers with their students. He is afraid that the district will squelch the wonderful minds of tomorrow.

Stephanie Culhane – She has a first grader at Eden Park School; she has a Kindergartener attending school next year; and her son is class of 2025. She commented that one thing that should be considered is the fact that not every child that comes into this school system has a pre-school experience. When one discusses socialization in Kindergarten, to be doing nothing but going through the rigors of math and reading is going to be taking away from these children who haven't had a pre-school experience for the socialization aspect. It will serve to leave a bad taste in the mouths of children about what school is about. They will not be learning to socialize with the people around them. She finds this very sad having as many young children as she does. To take these classes away serves to minimize the important work that the unified arts teachers do and the physical education teachers do. It is saying that a math teacher is more

important than an art teacher. Her child comes home showing her that she is making these connections between art and math and music and math and science. Everything comes together for a whole education. They should be looking at everything not just what the students are being tested on. If this goes through, it will look like another budget band aid or a quick fix on a gaping wound. People know that this is what this is about. This has nothing to do with staying on task. This is to take care of what happened a few months ago with the 6th graders moving back to the elementary schools. The Kindergarten teacher at Eden Park School has forty-five children. She asked how many science teachers have forty-five children in one class and how many teachers are asked to have that kind of effort all with the same students and parents for conferences. Not giving them that needed break to get their course work done and lesson plans done is saying to the Kindergarten teachers and students that they are not important. If the School Committee doesn't listen to what they are asking now just as they didn't listen to what they asked for with regard to the 6th grade, it will leave everyone feeling that the committee is smug and doesn't really care that they were elected by the parents to do what they asked them to do.

Gail Jeschke, Garden City School Kindergarten Teacher – The parents hit it right on the head. They are talking about the balance, and everything is integrated in Kindergarten. Music is integrated with the science, social studies, math and English; and the same is true for the art. One would have to think about these children working

with only Investigation Math and the Literacy Program, it would be a sad day. The curriculum written in 2000 talks about language arts, math, science, social studies, art and music. To think of cutting physical education from five and six year old children, when one thinks about the fact that every night on the news they are talking about the obesity problem in this country. The fact that Mr. Nero said the principals were all in favor of this, she found it insulting that elementary principals would be in support of this.

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Her principal knows that she is at the school until 5:00 p.m. or 6:00 p.m. every night, and she still can't keep up. She has many things that have to be done for each child on a daily basis. It takes one week to prepare one less for Investigations Math. She has been in education for thirty-two years, and it is a bad day in education. Mr. Nero interrupted and stated that he wanted to assure Mrs. Jeschke that the issue of money was never discussed. The School Committee will be facing other cuts which could be EPIC, strings, etc. as they go down the line. They will be the bigger things down the line. He didn't say it was the unanimous decision of the principals. There was a strong consensus of the principals. Mrs. Jeschke went on to say that the thought of these things being cut from Kindergarten isn't good. Kindergarten is the foundation of this school department. Today she was talking with a mother and waiting for the bus until 11:45 a.m., so that is fifteen minutes of her time. Then she had fifteen minutes left

to get her room ready for the PM Kindergarten. She has twenty-two students in the morning and the same in the afternoon. It is sad to think that the administration would think to cut something like this that is so important. It is so important to a balanced start for school.

Ms. Iannazzi stated that she has been fortunate to tour both Mrs. Jeschke's classroom and Mrs. Bowen's classroom, and she knows they are running around crazy all day. For some who haven't seen a Kindergarten, Ms. Iannazzi asked Mrs. Jeschke to explain what a regular school day is. Mrs. Bowen responded that every day is different. She invited them to come in unannounced any day. Mrs. Jeschke commented that if they worked by every single thing that is in their contract, she has conferences with every single one of her parents. She has been mentoring for the past twelve years, and she tells every single new Kindergarten teacher that even though it isn't in their contracts any more, how could they be a Kindergarten teacher and not meet with a five-year old's parent. She spent fifteen minutes times 42 students. She was there from 7:30 in the morning until 7:00 at night. She uses her lunch time and her itinerant time.

Mr. Nero asked if any principals wished to speak on this subject.

MaryAnn Casale, Principal of Garden City School – She stated that this issue had placed her in a very awkward position. She saw in the audience some of her itinerant teachers and classroom teachers. These are people she has worked with over the years. They are some

of the finest teachers in the school system. She agreed with everything they said about the importance of the arts, however, having said that, these are very tough times. Although she didn't know exactly where Mr. Nero is coming from, the district is looking at some major cuts in programs, personnel, and some teachers have been let go who have many years of experience. It was bothering her to no end. She has been here for twenty-nine years, and she feels that the system is beginning to dismantle. She wants to hold on to everything they possibly can. However, it is impossible, and things are not looking any better lately. The district has worked hard to achieve everything they have over the years. Since the students' time is so limited and the expectations for curriculum have become increasingly demanding, she felt it was not necessary or in the students' best interest to be interrupted for ½ hour out of the 2-1/2 hours. Many skills are taught in such a way that the art is taught as well as music. Art and music are absolutely integrated into that program, maybe not to the extent it would be in an art class or a music class, but it is integrated. She also realizes that many Kindergarten classes have a recess time in which they are not free to run around and

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do whatever. It is somewhat organized, and they do get some form of exercise and physical education when they play outdoors. When the district is in a financial position to institute a full-day Kindergarten,

and everyone would agree, that a full day Kindergarten program is needed. However, the district is not in that position right now. There will be time for the music, art, library, physical education, and maybe enrichment programs and all the things that students need and deserve. Right now the district is not at that point. She feels that the Kindergarten students have to start 1st grade with their feet hitting the ground and running. Mrs. Jeschke is the finest Kindergarten teacher in the City of Cranston, and her students hit the ground running. She covers those grade level expectations; she integrates the arts and music. She is not minimizing this issue. She has close contact with all her teachers, but they have to look at everything. Some serious decisions have been made about personnel and programs, and she didn't feel that this one was up there with some of the things that have been cut.

Ms. Iannazzi stated that she was thoroughly confused because Mr. Nero said it is not budget related; but now Mrs. Casale is justifying it by saying that if this is the least impact that will have to be cut then let it be this. Mr. Nero responded that they did not discuss money at all. When the principals were discussing the itinerants, they brought the subject up. He told them that they would have to let him know if this is what they wanted to do because he was figuring out the itinerant time. It had nothing to do with money; the issue was brought up by the principals talking about their test scores especially at the lower income schools.



**Ms. Iannazzi disagreed. She heard Mrs. Jeschke sing every day for one year, but she didn't learn from Mrs. Jeschke what she learned from Mrs. Merluzzo and Mr. Zapasnik. With all due respect to Mrs. Jeschke, there is a different program, and the students benefit from the well-rounded educational experience offered here. Keeping students involved in art, music, physical education, and library gets them engaged in the school system. Later on it prevents such issues such as truancy. She was definitely not supporting the administration's recommendation.**

**Jane Wall, 4 Grove Avenue – She stated that she felt sad that learning development happens between birth and age 5; that is scary. Art and music are a critical part of brain development, and there are numerous studies that show this. It stimulates different areas of the brain. She cringes at the thought of what today's Kindergarteners will discover. Children are going to question why they didn't have music, art, and physical education in Kindergarten. Everyone can say it is not budget, but it is logistic. Her husband is a teacher in Providence, and planning time is a very sweet and generous time. Often time, her daughter's Kindergarten teacher is at school very late in the day. Teachers teach because it is the right thing to do and because it is a passion. They do it because it is part of who they are. Her daughter loves everything about school, but her Kindergarten teacher, Mrs. Duvall, is one person. School is a community, and there are other people there that the students learn from. They learn music and art skills from other people. Ideally maybe one year of missing**

itinerants for ½ hour every other week may not be such a big deal. She doesn't want to be here a generation from now and say that they shouldn't have done this. There is enough data that shows that it is important. In all of the awards that are handed out and how they celebrate the success of the students in the achievements and in the accomplishments, it is a grave injustice

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to students, to families, and to teachers to be able to say that there are only so many hours in the day; and they have an extra grade level to work into the day. She will not stand quietly by; this is one she will take a stand on.

Mr. Nero commented that the principals met with him two months ago, and the issue was time on task; that is why administration went forward. It is not a money issue. It has nothing to do with money. When he mentioned this at a Liaison meeting, one of the people on Liaison came forward and said it would be a great idea that the teachers would love it because of the time on task.

Mr. Lombardi stated there are a lot of gray issues that the committee has to deal with. He doesn't see this as a gray issue at all. This is black and white, and it is jumping out in front of him. He did not see an issue. Music, art, and physical education are absolutely essential to the development of young children, particularly at the Kindergarten

age. He was all for it unless someone could show him a study that suggests that it isn't. This is an easy issue for him.

Chairman Traficante stated that the meeting was held with the principals and administration and not with the School Committee. The committee is being exposed to this for the first time. They did not discuss money on this issue nor were they aware of the issue to begin with. This is something that was an internal issue, and it was a policy issue with administration and principals. This is the first time the committee is embracing it.

Ms. Iannazzi stated that this was absolutely not a part of the 6th grade sub-committee. There was money put back into the budget for hiring itinerants for the 6th grade switching them from middle school to elementary schools. She defended Mr. Nero that this was absolutely not discussed during the 6th grade sub-committee. Mr. Nero added that when the committee cut to make additional cuts he had said that he preferred to wait because they were about to sit down to do the itinerants. He had one more FTE in the budget regarding that; this is not about the money.

Mr. Stycos asked if this proposal was for physical education, art, and music, and Mr. Nero responded that when they were looking at this, the principals asked him to look at the policy. The only policy they could find that may have been an issue dealt with the Wellness Policy which states that physical education should be offered to all

students. However, there is also a caveat in the Wellness Policy which states that it must be in compliance with the state statute which says that physical education must be offered in grades 1 through 12. As far as the Pre-Kindergarten issue, it is offered sporadically. Mr. Stycos asked what subjects the Kindergarten students have and when. Mr. Nero responded that they have ten ½ hour blocks over a two-week period where art, physical education, and music are taught. Mr. Stycos asked of the ten blocks every ten days how many are art, music, and physical education. Mrs. Lundsten explained that it is physical education once a week, then library every other week, art every other week. The students are getting equal amounts; they flip it. Because at the elementary level there is physical education twice a week, that means they get it at Kindergarten level once a week.

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Bethany Bobola, Parent – She stated that she understood that this came out of a discussion with the principals, and she meant no disrespect to any principal. The teachers are on the front line, and she asked if they were ever brought into the discussion to get their aspects of whether or not this was a good idea because they are the ones actually doing the work. Mr. Nero said that he was going to assume that when the principals came to him with this that there was

some cooperation between them and the teachers. Mrs. Bobola commented that from what she has heard everyone was blindsided. That is what some of the parents are hearing; that some teachers were completely blindsided by this. The first time they heard this was at the last School Committee meeting when there were little whisperings about it.

Mr. Laliberte stated that for several years administration has been hearing from Kindergarten teachers and from principals who have been listening to their Kindergarten teachers that there is just not enough time in the day to fit in all the reading and the math that has to be done. They are looking at the possibility of not having all-day Kindergarten which they were hoping to have in the near future; but it doesn't look like that is going to happen in the near future. This has to be taken into consideration. They were taking teacher opinions into consideration when administration thought about this. They were telling administration that they didn't have enough time to get through the math and reading that they have to do with the children. Unfortunately, those are the two major areas the students are being tested on and the schools are being judged on. If one goes back in history in Cranston, originally when the ½ hour a day was put into place as a teacher's planning period, not because art, music, physical education, and library were extremely important at the Kindergarten level and to expose children to that part of the curriculum, it was put in there for the teachers to have common planning time. Those are facts that people have to know and remember.

**Mr. Colozzi asked Mr. Laliberte why it is in the national standards that music and art education are Kindergarten through. It may serve as planning time, as far as the Cranston Public Schools are concerned, but it is in the national standards throughout the United States that Kindergarten education in the fine arts is important. This is a matter of convenience for the district. He asked why all these years it has been said that it is important for arts education to be in Kindergarten, and all of a sudden it is not important any more. In more lucrative times, it may be important again. Mr. Laliberte responded that it is also in a Kindergarten curriculum that the teachers do a phenomenal job working art and music into their curriculum. He has said several times that there was a time in Cranston that a Kindergarten teacher was not hired who could not play the piano. One of the reasons that stopped is because the district could no longer afford to tune all the pianos. Mr. Nero added that there is a lot of art work that is done in social studies as well. His son just finished his first semester of art in high school, and he hopes he never has to take it again. However, his digital portfolio work is inundated with art work that he is doing in honors history and physics classes. This is some of the things that principals discuss with him that it is not vocationally taught by an art teacher but it is taught avocationally by the teacher. Again, it is not about the money.**

**Mrs. Tocco-Greenaway stated that she was in agreement with Mr. Lombardi and Ms. Iannazzi. She sees this as integral to their**

learning. The Title 1 school students and students from economically or challenged backgrounds are more likely to lose out if this

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is taken away from them than the other students who come from homes like hers. These things actually help the children learn. Her mother had a massive stroke last year, and she learned that the part of the brain that allows a person to sing is a different part from the one that allows one to speak. She can sing; speaking is so difficult. Part of her therapy was to help her start singing again, so she learned to speak again through her singing. She would never support this.

Mr. Scherza told everyone present that they were getting far a field. No one is saying that the arts or music are not important. He stated that he is a big proponent of all-day Kindergarten. He has been pushing for it, and would continue to push for it until the district gets it. The discussion here was not to say whether or not art or any of the itinerant positions are important or not important. The issue came with time on task, and that came from teachers and administrators; and that is how the discussion grew. There were people discussing it who were both administrators and teachers. The issue here is the time testing; one is only as good as his or her last test. That was the context in which the discussion took place. It was not about importance or dollars.

**Chairman Traficante stated to Mr. Scherza that he was getting the feeling from the School Committee that this was a policy they could not accept, so hopefully he would retract it.**

**Mr. Flynn commented that there was a time when they hired the Kindergarten teachers who could only play the piano, and those same teachers when they became pregnant had to resign their jobs. Neither one of those things were right.**

**Chairman Traficante stated that the School Committee would be appearing before the City Council on Tuesday, April 22nd, at 6:30 p.m. at Cranston East. The Mayor has given the School Committee \$1 million. They gave \$1 million in the current year, and there is a \$4 million deficit now. The committee cannot survive on that \$1 million. If the committee has to go forward with a \$1 million budget, the programs such as EPIC, athletics, and a variety of other programs will suffer. That is not a threat; it is a fact. The \$1 million won't even cover unfunded mandates that the district has to pay for. He asked the public to please be there on April 22nd at 6:30 p.m. at Cranston East because if the City Council doesn't feel the public's wrath, the committee won't get the money.**

**Mrs. Lundsten commented that she had the pleasure the other day of being with the assistant chancellor for the New York City public schools. She was astounded to learn that they took music and art out of the elementary school in New York City. This is happening across**



the United States, and everyone made a wonderful point tonight; but unless the public are at Cranston East on April 22nd to support this, the district could be facing the same thing down the road. Mrs. Lundsten went on to say that the assistant chancellor did not think this was a great idea at all. They are right down to the bare bones. It could be coming this way too. She asked the public to come out and support the budget. The School Committee wants to make this work, but they need the public's help.

Bethany Bobola, Parent – Mrs. Bobola referred to the earlier comment about an alternative plan, and she asked what it is. Mr. Nero responded that he had indicated to Ms. Iannazzi in the past that as administration goes forward with the consolidation, he

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had one FTE, and Ms. Iannazzi took that one person. He told her that he would like to wait for one month until things settled down. They did the itinerant schedule in the traditional way. When they brought up this issue and asked what they were going to do, he told them that he had checked out the policy and this is what administration wants to do. In mass, it seemed like 100% support, but as they go back and talk to the teachers who are members of the collective bargaining unit he was sure that they received feedback.

Mrs. Bobola commented that she is a member of the PTO at Eden

**Park School, and there was a letter that came from Mr. Traficante about the budget hearing. There has been talk about other money that can be freed up, and Mr. Traficante indicated that he was unsure about what money she was referring to. Mr. Lombardi explained that the Mayor has an RFP out on three buildings. Mr. Traficante indicated that any parent who missed the budget presentation on April 8th can attend the same type of meeting at Cranston West on April 21st at 7:00 p.m. in the auditorium.**

**Chairman Traficante called a recess at 8:10 p.m.**

**Chairman Traficante reconvened the work session at 8:18 p.m.**

## **2. Building-by-Building Energy Report Presentation**

**Mr. Zisseron indicated that last month Mr. Stycos brought up some questions regarding energy. He stated that he and Mrs. Karen Verrengia, Energy Manager, wished to make a presentation to the committee on energy savings. Mr. Zisseron commented that Mrs. Verrengia has done a fantastic job in this capacity. Mrs. Verrengia prepared an energy report for the committee. A copy of this report is on file in the Cranston School Committee office. Mr. Zisseron outlined the report for the committee. He further commented that in one year the savings on electricity and natural gas was \$343,607. As he has indicated to the committee in the past, this is what they have saved. They would have spent that much more if had they not had**

**this program. The program is working very well, and there is a lot of room for improvement; and a lot of improvement will depend upon budget considerations.**

**Mrs. Verrengia explained that they have only a six-month projection for oil because bulk fuel is difficult to track, and they focus on consumption. She needs to take a twelve-month period of time, a completed heating season, spread that information into an Excel sheet with weather considerations and spread it out over a twelve-month period of time. Since the base line is December of 2005 to November of 2006, the only information that she had available to her that is accurate and current is January 2006 to June 2006. She thought this was a good depiction of oil because of the fact that those are the winter months that it is showing. That is why there are six months of oil as opposed to twelve months of oil.**

**Mr. Zisseron noted that there are inaccurate numbers for Woodridge School, and he distributed the correct figures to the committee. He also commented that the program is moving along very well, and in one year they have done extremely well. Mrs. Verrengia has worked very hard with principals, teachers, and maintenance staff. Her hard work is starting to show results of what the district saved this year.**

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**Mr. Stycos stated that the report was very good, and he would be**

interested to see what happens when they figure how cold the winter is. Mrs. Verrengia responded that she couldn't give the committee a report with the degree days in it. They felt the committee would want to know the bottom line of what was actually used and what was actually spent. Those reports are available.

Mr. Stycos stated that this originally came up because he was suggesting that the temperature points be lowered for heating and increase the kick-in points for cooling. He was in no way minimizing this report, but perhaps they could get more savings if they lowered those temperatures. Mrs. Verrengia explained that the guidelines now are 68 to 72 degrees for heating. There is very little cooling. She strives for the lowest temperature she can possibly get but at the same time maintaining a comfortable atmosphere and learning environment for children. Her goal when she makes adjustments is 68 degrees. If they have other structural limitations such as antiquated equipment and windows, those are all taken into consideration. Mr. Zisseron commented that they hoped to do more work with the heating systems, thermostats, etc. which will give them more control. Mr. Stycos stated that he didn't understand the resistance to going from 65 to 68 degrees. Mr. Zisseron explained that the point of the program is not to make it uncomfortable. The savings are during off hours. Many of the buildings have problems maintaining heat because they are old. Mr. Stycos commented that that argument could be used for setting the temperature at 80 and that it is hard for the buildings to maintain heat. They would need to

set a temperature that is reasonable which is 65 to 68 and then strive to hit within a reasonable range according to what they can do with the equipment they have. He asked why they would have the temperature points up in the 70's which is too high. Mr. Zisseron explained that they set them somewhere between 68 and 72. If they set them between 65 to 68, he felt there would be a lot of problems with staff and especially with students sitting in classrooms with jackets. Mrs. Verrengia said this is her opinion also because there have been areas throughout the district where people have told her that children are requesting to put their coats on because a space is having difficulty maintaining a temperature. Mr. Stycos suggested that this could be a space that wouldn't be dropped any more. He further commented that children need less heat than older people. Mr. Lombardi added that homes are much more efficient than school buildings. Mr. Stycos added that the students are wearing T shirts to school, and they could put on sweaters.

Mrs. Greifer said that she keeps her home at 68 degrees, and her home is extremely well insulated. She wears a sweater all day, and her feet are cold most of the time. She has tried to set her thermostat lower, but she can't. Children can take a lot more, but to be able to function during the school day, it is not an optimal learning experience. Mr. Stycos stated that he is not advocating for people to be cold.

Mrs. Tocco-Greenaway commented that a lot of progress has been

made at West. Teenagers' bodies are more efficient. They can tolerate temperatures more than most people; they are always warm. Little children can get cold, and they don't maintain body temperature because their bodies don't sweat and they don't maintain heat. One of the concerns is that the buildings are not being overheated where children can tolerate cooler temperatures and that the buildings that have little children don't get too cold.

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Mrs. Greifer referred to the results for Cranston East, and she commented that she assumed this happened because of the new library addition. Mrs. Verrengia explained that she would have to look at the last report in order to answer her question. There is a sixteen-month discrepancy because of construction, and transmitters have been eliminated and reinstated. It doesn't reflect a success or a failure at this time. Mr. Balducci has recently approved a new base line for that building. In response to Mr. Stycos's question, Mrs. Verrengia explained that she aims for a temperature of 68 degrees. He asked Mrs. Verrengia if she would have any difficulty with a policy that said that the temperature in the building should be as close as possible to 68 degrees instead of 72. Mrs. Verrengia responded that there are a lot of variables. She likes it the way it is. The district is in its infancy with energy conservation, and they are still trying to gain

control over buildings; and they are focusing on that control. Rhodes School has one temperature in the whole building, and by the time the thermostat gets up to temperature, part of the building would be a little warmer. She will try to stay within two degrees of their goal. It would behoove them to make it status quo. Mr. Zisseron added that they are looking at building recovery as well to see how long it takes a building to recover from over night to the time the students come in to school. They tried starting some buildings at 7:00 a.m., and it didn't work out so they dropped the start up time to 6:30 a.m. Those are the things they are still trying to work out. They are growing with it, and they are getting some good information. The next heating season they should be able to do some good things. Mrs. Verrengia commented that while they are focusing on all spaces they still have a lot of opportunity on unoccupied time.

Mrs. Tocco-Greenaway asked how they would know at West as an example if a door has a gap or a wall has a gap and cold air is blowing in. Mr. Zisseron explained that while everyone is tucked in at night sleeping, Mrs. Verrengia is going through the buildings. She will give work orders where she feels work has to be done. There may be an outside door that isn't tight enough and needs to be brought in. She goes through the buildings when they are unoccupied. Mrs. Verrengia explained that she listens for motors that are running and shouldn't be running, and whistles of breeze that might be blowing. She will leave a report and give a copy to Mr. Zisseron who in turn will tell the custodians. The custodians play a

very big part in all of this. If a custodian doesn't do what he is supposed to do, the program won't work. If the HVAC and electricians don't do what they are supposed to do, the program won't work.

Mr. Stycos asked if Mr. Zisseron felt that the budget as passed would have sufficient money to do these kinds of incidental repairs. Mr. Zisseron stated that there were sufficient funds. They have to have more control over the thermostats versus the teachers having control. Everyone has a different comfort zone. They have some steam traps planned for some schools and thermostats. The capital budget supported \$100,000 for energy saving projects. Mrs. Verrengia commented that they have been able to adjust the equipment they already have in place or have some things on hand in storage. The HVAC technician has been wonderful in working with her. If something fails, he will try to fix it. If he can't fix it, he will look in his storage to see if he already has it. Many of the things they have been able to do have required much out-of-pocket expense. She has been able to get grant money for thermostats in buildings.

### **3. Feasibility Plan for Student Parking Permits for Cranston High School East and Cranston High School West**



**This portion was discussed in Executive Session.**

#### **4. Budget Format for Easier Readability**

**Ms. Iannazzi reported that Mr. Steven Bloom worked on a document that was distributed to the School Committee. A copy of the document is available in the Cranston School Committee office. She noted that there is still a lot of work to be done, and it was understood that when the sub-committee started this work that they would not have the work completed by this work session but that they would try to get as much as they could prior to the City Council presentation. Ms. Iannazzi suggested that the committee take the document home and read it to suggest any changes. It is a document that they can attempt to present to the City Council at the hearing on April 22nd.**

**Mr. Scherza indicated that there was a lot of good material contained in the report, and some of it should be highlighted during the City Council presentation. He cited the rate of growth of school department employee salaries versus other salaries. Mr. Traficante commented that he pointed out to Ms. Iannazzi that they should have a power point presentation regarding the rate of inflation, etc.**

**Mrs. Greifer referred to the Cranston City Services page and asked for an explanation of the items with ovals.**

**Moved by Mr. Stycos, seconded by Mrs. Tocco-Greenaway and unanimously carried to suspend the rules to allow the public to speak.**

**Mr. Bloom explained that the items highlighted are the more important things for people to look at. If someone was looking at this document, they would see a comparison for city services and the school district.**

**Mr. Lombardi commented that this report is a great job but would eliminate any political commentary. That is the School Committee's role. He would make it a purely numbers comparison illustration. Ms. Iannazzi asked everyone to e-mail their suggested changes to her.**

**Mrs. Tocco-Greenaway asked when the committee could expect to see this in final form so that it could be posted on the website. This information could be posted so that people could intelligently advocate for the school district. Mr. Traficante stated that he assumed the sub-committee would meet in the immediate future to re-draft this report again. Mr. Scherza commented that since this was a sub-committee formed by resolution it is an advisory committee to the School Committee, and the School Committee has to accept it.**

**Mr. Bloom remarked that at the last sub-committee meeting Ms. Iannazzi raised the point that this is a rather lengthy document, and**

many parents and taxpayers may not wish to read something that is ten pages in length. He drafted a one-page letter with a

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one-page spread sheet which he could forward to the School Committee so that there are two documents issued, one with the major points and the other with more explanation. Ms. Iannazzi commented that she thought that document needed a lot of work and was too political.

Mrs. Tocco-Greenaway referred to the portion on the student parking permits and asked if it could be brought forward at a public meeting to have it adopted so that it could be available on the floor for anyone who might have questions. She followed up on things that she has been hearing from people for years. People want to know that the committee did some business on this subject.

## **II. Adjournment**

Moved by Ms. Iannazzi, seconded by Mrs. Greifer and unanimously carried that the work session be adjourned.

There being no further business to come before the work session, it was adjourned at 9:05 p.m.

**Respectfully submitted,**

**Andrea M. Iannazzi**

**Clerk**